



**Fostering Excellence in Research on
State-Church-Body Politics**



Grant Agreement ID: 101184092
Horizon Europe - ERA Chairs

Kick-off Meeting of FERBOPO

Press Release

26 November 2024

Sibiu, Romania

Kicked off during a special session on 25-26 November 2024, the ‘**Fostering Excellence in Research on State-Church-Body Politics (FERBOPO)**’ ERA Chair Project represents an innovative initiative aimed at developing academic excellence and strengthening the presence of the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu (ULBS) in the European Research Area (ERA).

The project has been awarded a €2.5 million grant under the Horizon Europe - ERA Chairs HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-TALENTS-01 framework (Grant Agreement ID: 101184092) and will span five years, from November 1, 2024, to October 31, 2029.

Central to this ERA Chair initiative is **Professor Lavinia Stan** from St. Francis Xavier University in Canada, an expert in the cross-cutting fields of government, religion, economics, and feminist epistemology.

As holder of the ERA Chair position, she will play a key role in creating a *‘pocket of excellence’* at ULBS that will set new standards in academic research and innovation in Sibiu and Romania, particularly in the areas of gender equality and social sciences. FERBOPO will provide capacity building and assist ULBS to implement institutional reforms that align with ERA priorities and facilitate the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP).

Over the next five years, FERBOPO will focus on:

- attracting international academic talents to ULBS to reverse the ‘brain drain’ in Romania’s higher education system.
- promoting gender equality through institutional reforms and structural changes.
- participating in competitive calls for research funding at the national and European levels to increase ULBS’s integration in ERA.
- developing a research project on gender, age, and institutional policies for women in Romanian workplaces.
- reaching out to various audiences, ranging from academics and policymakers to civil society organizations and the general public, on key topics focusing on gender equality and diversity.

With regard to FERBOPO, ERA Chair Holder, Prof. Lavinia Stan mentioned:

“This ERA Chair aims at connecting Romanian researchers with scholars recognized internationally for their work on state, religion and gender politics. For me personally, it is an unparalleled chance to engage closely with a dynamic group of scholars at the ULBS, to expand on my work on gender politics, women’s studies, as well as religion and politics, and to set the foundation of a new research team of early and late career scholars passionate about these topics. The research part of this ERA Chair will help facilitate new analyses, the dissemination activities will communicate our findings to

specialized and wider audiences, while the policy segment will embolden us to draft new documents necessary for the university. An important contribution of this ERA will be is represented by our efforts to bring together specialists from various fields and disciplines who will work collaboratively as part of a new research team. I am happy to return to Sibiu, where I lived 35 years ago and where I helped organize an international congress as Vice-President of the Society for Romanian Studies in 2012. I'm hopeful that all my ULSB colleagues will support me in fulfilling the responsibilities we assumed through this new ERA Chair."

Principal Investigator of FERBOPO, Associate Professor Ph.D. Ionela Vlase, stated:

" FERBOPO is an excellent opportunity for our university to achieve excellence in academic research in Social Sciences, especially in poorly documented areas dedicated to gender equality and decolonial feminism in our country. This project is one of the most complex endeavours undertaken by our university and it comprises several interrelated components. Aside from the creation of a new research group on the relationship between Church-State and Body Politics, the project includes the operation of a group of experts on equality and diversity issues which will benefit from the guidance of the ERA chair holder and her research group. This ERA Chair grant is a rare achievement if we take into account the fact that only a few countries and institutions have been successful in obtaining funding during the recent HORIZON Europe call. Two universities in Romania have received such funding this year. This is an outstanding performance for Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu and I am certain that the project implementation will have a multiplier effect on future funding opportunities for our institution. "

During the kick-off meeting, **Associate Professor Ph.D. Ionela Vlase** and **Professor Ph.D. Mihaela Herciu** provided an in-depth overview of the project's overall goal, objectives, work plan, and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aimed through FERBOPO. This milestone event focused on the future of social sciences research at ULBS and the transformative potential of the **FERBOPO** ERA Chair Project in driving institutional reforms.

About FERBOPO

Led by ERA Chair Professor Lavinia Stan, FERBOPO will create a "pocket of excellence" at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu (ULBS) that focuses on the complex dynamics between state, church, and body politics, while advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in social sciences research. With funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe (GA: 101184092), FERBOPO will enhance ULBS's academic excellence and its integration into the European Research Area.

FERBOPO Details and Updates:

Website: <https://grants.ulbsibiu.ro/ferbopo/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ferbopo/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ferbopo>

Email: grant.ferbopo@ulbsibiu.ro

